

# Information Brief

## Welcome to NCLD-Youth

**Who are we?** National Consortium on Leadership and Disability for Youth (NCLD-Youth) is a youth-led resource, information, and training center for youth and emerging leaders with developmental disabilities, housed at the Institute for Educational Leadership and funded by the Administration on Developmental Disabilities. NCLD-Youth is taking a positive development approach to working with the next generation of disability community leaders, and developing materials to better prepare them for the transition to adulthood, and leadership, rather than focus on the negative statistics one hears so often about youth with disabilities.

We have decided to use the five areas of youth development and leadership, **learning, connecting, thriving, working, and leading** to guide our work. These five areas correspond with 7 of the 8 areas of emphasis listed in the Developmental Disabilities Act (employment, education, housing, recreation, health, childcare, quality assurance, and transportation). To look at youth with disabilities as an example, one could argue that it is no longer sufficient to say that simply because a young person with a disability knows what self-determination is, that they are a leader. Self-determination is certainly a very important set of skills to have, however, if he or she lacks competency in the five areas of development where self-determination would be utilized, it renders the set of skills ineffective. “An additional factor (to students with disabilities experiencing great difficulty in post-secondary education) is limited development of self-determination/self-advocacy skills when students exit high school. (Lamb, 2004)” As a young person, it is one thing to be able to feel confident in making a decision, however it is another to make an uninformed choice that can have long-term impacts on one’s life such as signing up for a credit card, applying for health insurance, getting married. Self determination and self advocacy coupled with informed choices are critical skills to learn.

NCLD-Youth is dedicated to helping the next generation of young leaders with disabilities understand how to gain the knowledge, skills and content they need to continue the next leg of the disability rights movement.

There are four key partnerships to this project

- **The Arc of the United States.**

- ***Florida Developmental Disabilities Council (FDDC) and Agency on Persons with Disabilities (APD)***
- ***New Hampshire Developmental Disabilities Council (NHDDC)***
- ***Inclusion Research Institute, Washington DC***

### **What do we want to do?**

NCLD-Youth strives to support and promote the next generation of leaders in the disability community through the following three objectives.

- 1) Identify and develop high quality, disability specific curricula around the give areas of youth development and leadership;
- 2) Test, refine, and disseminate instructional materials throughout Florida, New Hampshire, and Washington DC to build networks of national, state, and local level partnerships of peer mentors, adult advisors and Councils of youth and emerging leaders;
- 3) Develop, train, and mentor youth and emerging young leaders with developmental disabilities in each of the three partner states to influence state and local-level youth development and leadership public policy.

While our goals may seem almost incredible, our methodology to achieve these goals is well-grounded. To assure our relevance to youth with disabilities, our primary stakeholders, we will depend on the personal experience of our three state Youth Councils and our national Steering Committee to keep NCLD-Youth a youth-driven project.

The substance of our project will be organized around the five areas of development and NCLD-Youth will use this framework to test and demonstrate the effectiveness of an integrated program of work. NCLD-Youth's approach will be to build a national infrastructure around youth development and leadership for youth with developmental disabilities by developing needed curricula and testing and engaging the state and local networks where our work is focused.

### **Why we're needed?**

Research shows that youth who experience opportunities to engage in youth development have a decreased likelihood of unemployment, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, incarceration, and other high-risk behaviors. Rather than focus on the negative aspects of what it is youth are doing that's bad or unhealthy, this project is centered around what the activities, supports, and outcomes youth need to help them make informed choices and have a successful transition to adulthood.

As a result of emerging research around self-determination, leaders in the disability community, specifically from the youth community, noted the need for centers that were not only youth-focused, but youth led. The idea was to emulate the parent training and information centers with a youth focus, parallel to the sentiment of "nothing about us without us," a mantra in the disability community.

NCLD-Youth is tasked with developing materials and trainings that will be used to empower youth and emerging leaders with disabilities to influence and promote youth development and leadership public policy agenda at the state and local level.

### **How are we going to do it?**

#### **Resource**

We are going to undertake an extensive research project to locate information, curricula, and instructional materials focusing on the five areas of youth development and leadership for youth and emerging leaders with developmental disabilities. This research will tell us where there are good materials available and where the gaps are. Once we determine where the gaps are we will task ourselves with filling in those gaps, ensuring that there is a comprehensive package of materials that are disability friendly, available to educate and inform the next generation of young leaders with disabilities. NCLD-Youth has established a youth led Steering Committee and State Youth Councils in the three partner states to assist in the reviewing, refinement, and dissemination of the products developed.

#### **Training**

The first training that NCLD-Youth will develop is for the youth and emerging leaders from the National Steering Committee and State Youth Councils in the five areas of youth leadership and development. These youth will then be tasked to go out into their communities and engage, convene, and train other youth with disabilities, in order to create a strong foundation for to push for a state or local agenda around youth leadership and development. Both project staff and youth will be involved in training and giving presentations and regional and national meetings.

#### **Information**

Through its research and training aspects, NCLD-Youth will review, refine, and disseminate a curricula focused on the five areas of youth development and leadership. All materials produced will be tested for age, stage, and developmental appropriateness for its audience and available on a youth designed and populated website. NCLD-Youth will also advise, speak, and staff YLFs, facilitate cross organization conference calls, recruit for internships, scholarships, and job opportunities, develop a database for leadership development opportunities and become one of the go-to places for connecting with youth with disabilities.

All young people need to learn how to make informed choices about their future. Youth with disabilities, especially youth with developmental disabilities often need additional and specialized support services in order to achieve successful outcomes. This project intends to exemplify the high expectations laid out for people with disabilities by our brothers and sisters in the movement and written into law in the Americans with Disabilities Act. Achieving the goals of inclusion,

independent living, full participation, and economic self-sufficiency with and without supports will make the American Dream not only achievable for youth with disabilities but accessible as well!

For more information on NCLD-Youth and the work that we do, please contact  
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Check out our website for new products and exciting updates!  
<http://www.ncl-d-youth.info>

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